

June 1, 2013

**engAGE Grant Final Report:**

**Public Transportation Familiarization for Older Adults in North Clackamas County**

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The North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District's (NCPRD) Milwaukie Center has used funds from the engAGE in Community grant to assist older adults in becoming familiarized with local public transportation options. The Milwaukie Center's Travel Program has done this by offering trips to fun and interesting destinations in the Portland metropolitan area that are accessible by public transportation.

**Explanation of Trips**

The original goal of NCPRD's Public Transportation Familiarization program was to offer approximately 3-4 engAGE funded trips per month that use public transportation. Since October 2012, the Travel Program has been able to offer 12 trips and the total number of participants was 111. All trips were organized and implemented by the Travel Program Coordinator, Todd Shetterly.

All trips have utilized MAX light rail system; Amtrak, bus, and streetcar modes of transport involving transfers have also been used. Trip participants meet at the Milwaukie Center and are shuttled by Milwaukie Center's Recreation bus to the Clackamas Town Center's MAX Green Line station. Prior to the trip, the Travel Program Coordinator purchases all-day "Honored Citizen" transit tickets and/or Amtrak tickets and distributed them to the participants. For safety and comfort reasons, all engAGE trips have been limited to 8-14 participants.

Trip destinations have included Gresham Station, Portland Aerial Tram, the Portland Art Museum, Hillsboro, Powell's Books, Portland Center Stage, Portland City Grill, the Chinese Garden, as well as further destinations like Centralia and Albany. Each trip has begun with the light rail system, and many of the trips have included transfers to other types of public transportation. For example, the Portland Aerial Tram Trip included four different modes of public transportation: light rail, bus, streetcar and aerial tram.

The engAGE in Community grant funding has gone towards offsetting the cost of transportation, entrance/admission fees and staff-time to run these trips. Grant funding was exhausted as of May 30,

2013. At the beginning of the grant cycle, most of the trips planned were to conservative destinations to places in nearby Portland. However, as it became apparent that the engAGE trips were becoming popular, trips to further destinations were planned. In fact, trips were taken to Albany, Oregon and Centralia, Washington using Amtrak.

### **Participant Reactions**

The average age of the trip participants has been 77. As we hoped, an informal/anecdotal survey of participants has shown that the trip experiences have made them feel more comfortable and confident using public transportation. People have stated that they feel less concerned and frightened about taking public transportation. They have had fun on the trips and have stated that they feel like they are going on a real adventure. They have also stated that it has helped to go on these adventures in a group, and they would have been less likely to venture out on public transportation by themselves. However, most of the participants, if they are still capable of driving, have also stated that they will continue to drive as their primary method of travel. One of the reasons for this is that many people in the North Clackamas area do not live in close proximity to a bus stop.

The biggest complaint with using public transportation throughout the engAGE trips is that people felt that they were at the 'mercy of the system.' For example, several of the trips encountered delays while using MAX, causing unplanned wait time. It was also a more time consuming method of transportation. Another challenge with the program has been that, because of time constraints, participants were bused – using NCPRD's recreation bus – to the Clackamas Town Center MAX station to embark on trips. Boarding a TriMet bus at the Milwaukie Center, while making the excursion a total public transportation outing, would simply add too much time to the trip, making it unfeasible to visit many destinations. Therefore, they are unable to complete a whole trip using public transportation. Another challenge is adequately communicating physical requirements for these trips. There have been several people who have not been physically suited for walking short distances.

### **Conclusion**

Overall the Public Transportation Familiarization for Older Adults program has been a great success in keeping with engAGE in Community's mission to make Clackamas County a "place for all ages." The engAGE in Community grant has added the use of public transportation to the Travel program's repertoire, increasing the number of trips and widening the types of destinations. Perhaps one of the greatest measurements of success is whether or not the grant program is replicable; in fact, the Travel Coordinator is planning to offer several engAGE trips in the future, including to the Oregon Zoo and Out to Lunch Bunch trips to restaurants near MAX lines. We have been delighted to play a role that "supports people's ability to age actively and successfully in their home or community of choice".